

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 22 FEBRUARY 2022

DELIVERING LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION IN ANGUS VIA THE EDINBURGH BIODIVERSITY DECLARATION & THE NATURE RESTORATION FUND

REPORT BY ALISON SMITH, DIRECTOR OF VIBRANT COMMUNITIES & SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

ABSTRACT

Local Authorities are encouraged by the Scottish Government to fulfil their biodiversity duty in many ways through policy and strategy development and via project delivery. This includes the delivery of projects that restore wildlife and habitats on land and sea, addressing the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change.

To enable meaningful action during the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, the Scottish Government has outlined its preferred delivery mechanism – the Edinburgh Process and has launched a multi-year competitive funding stream – the Nature Restoration Fund. A category is aimed specifically at local authorities, The Edinburgh Process Fund.

Together, both will provide opportunities for local authorities to play an important role in delivering Scotland's post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and targets. NatureScot recently called on all Scottish Local Authorities to become signatories in the run up to COP15 in April 2022.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee: -

- (i) Delegate the Chief Executive to sign the Edinburgh Declaration on biodiversity and note the commitments within the declaration as part of future Council activity; and
- (ii) Note the launch of the Edinburgh Process Fund, a semi-competitive fund for Local Authorities and their partners engaged in delivering local nature networks and other biodiversity projects locally. The fund will open in 2022.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN

- 2.1 Commitment to the Edinburgh declaration contributes to the following priorities in the Angus Council Plan:

Economy: We want Angus to be a 'go-to' area for business

- Make Angus a low-carbon, sustainable area

Place: We want our communities to be strong, resilient, and led by citizens

- Continue to reduce the council's carbon footprint with the aim of reducing our net carbon emissions to zero by 2045

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, public bodies have a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Angus Council has a strong commitment through the Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan which sets out 140 projects to protect the multitude of flora and fauna across the area and brings together organisations, communities, and individuals. Species champions also further support activity across the area.

- 3.2 Angus Council deliver against many of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) 'Aichi Targets' and all the big six steps have been included in the Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-26. These include:
- Ecosystem restoration
 - Investment in Natural Capital
 - Quality greenspace for health and education benefits
 - Conserving wildlife in Scotland
 - Sustainable management of land and freshwater
 - Marine and coastal ecosystems restored

COP15 targets will incorporate these themes, many of which shape Angus Council and partners biodiversity strategy and action. Recent and ongoing work is set out in the Statutory Biodiversity Duty Report on Delivery, ([Report 331/20 refers](#)).

The Edinburgh Process & Declaration

- 3.3 In conjunction with the United Nations CBD, the Scottish Government is leading the 'Edinburgh Process' of consultation with subnational governments on their role in relation to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and targets. It is a primary means for local governments to be formally represented in the international process and to show political support for global action on biodiversity conservation. New targets will be agreed at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) in Kunming, China, during April 2022.
- 3.4 A key outcome from the Edinburgh process is the Edinburgh Declaration. The Declaration calls on the Parties to the CBD to recognise the critical role of sub-national governments, cities, and local authorities in delivering for biodiversity. Delivering local action to meet global goals and targets.
- 3.4.1 Key elements of the Declaration are to shape the next Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and associated Delivery Plan to 2030. The Scottish Government has been involved in international negotiations ahead of COP15, via the Edinburgh Process, and has committed to publishing a new biodiversity strategy within one year of COP15.
- 3.5 The Declaration contains a commitment, which is already delivered by Scottish local authorities under the Biodiversity Duty and to strengthen capacity building to deliver nature-based solutions, for example to mitigate climate change, through both green (land-based vegetation and soil) and blue (water-based) infrastructure. Signatories agree in principle to:
- Build on previous efforts, recognising the value of nature.
 - Implement appropriate actions that build on global goals.
 - Mainstream these actions, integrating them into local planning, management, and governance.

The Nature Restoration Fund

- 3.6 The next Scottish Biodiversity Strategy will take account of the outcomes from COP 15 and address the decline in Scotland's nature. Taking action for nature in Scotland, and locally, is an immediate priority. The Scottish Government Nature Restoration Fund is, therefore, a key mechanism for Local Authorities and their partners to address the crisis locally. Climate change makes the challenges faced by nature and communities more significant in impact. All project proposals must demonstrate how the project will help to address climate change and its impacts.

Fund priorities include:

- Habitat and species restoration – management for enhancement and connectivity
- Freshwater restoration, including restoring natural flows in rural catchments
- Coastal and marine management to promote restoration and resilience
- Control of invasive non-native species impacting on nature

These themes are areas in which Angus Council has a strong track record of delivery.

- 3.7 Currently Angus Council is working on the development of Nature Restoration Fund projects with external partners including a multi-year landscape scale project in the Angus Glens. In

2021 the fund provided an opportunity for Angus Council to create urban wetlands, increase urban trees and purchase cut and lift machinery to allow meadow management across Angus. The £55m fund will run over the next four years, with at least £12.5m available annually, ([Report 390/21 refers](#)).

- 3.8 The Angus Council journey to net-zero by 2045 focusses on key themes including nature-based solutions, and working with businesses, land managers and communities to secure nature rich, resilient places. The Edinburgh Declaration and funding streams including the Edinburgh Process Fund provide opportunities to be guided by a globally shaped framework, to deliver local action, at critical point at the beginning of the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The commitments within the Declaration form a key element of Council activity across the organisation and specific collaborative activity progressed through existing resources within the Environment and Climate Change team, therefore no financial implications arising from this report.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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List of Appendices:

Appendix 1: The Edinburgh Declaration